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'ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS'

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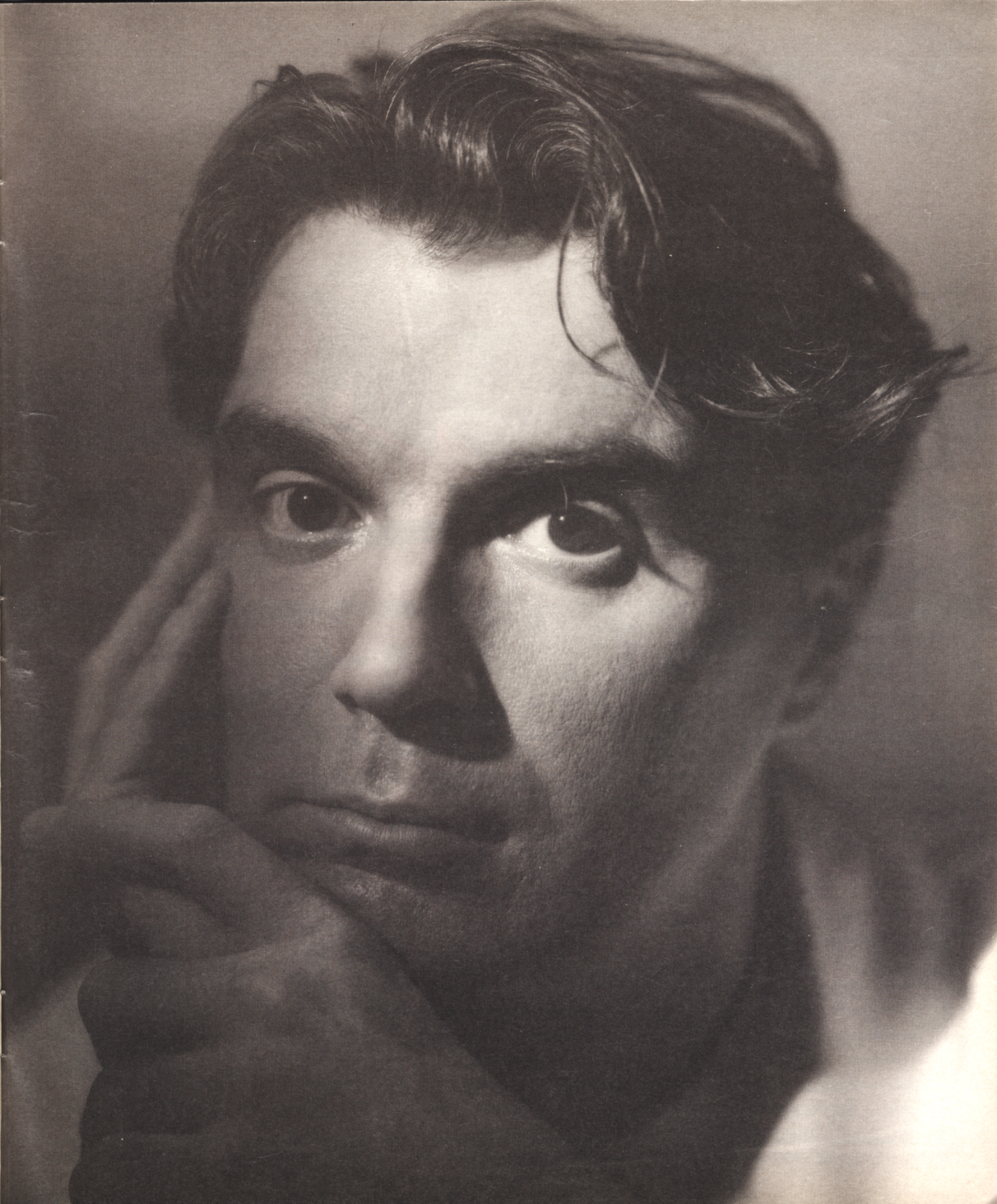
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COVER: Photograph of Tom Cruise by Herb Ritts, Camulus Ranch, Piru, California, October 1989. Hair by Barbara Lorenz; makeup by Rick Sharp; styling by Sharon Simonaire for Visages Style, Los Angeles. Clothing by Ecru, Los Angeles.

DAVID BYRNE *Illustration by Philip Burke*

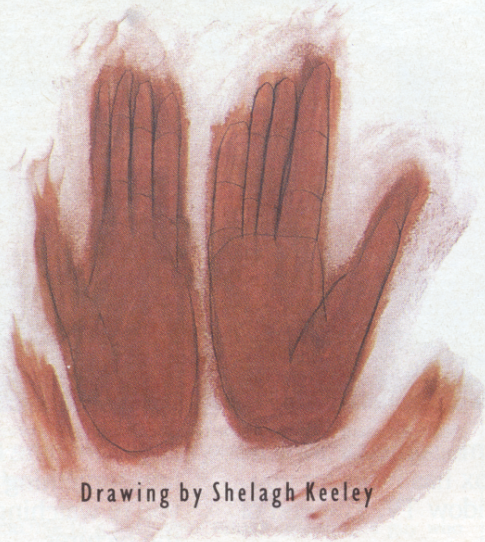


DAVID BYRNE PUTS TALKING HEADS ON HOLD FOR A FORAY INTO LATIN MUSIC

By Craig Bromberg

Speaking in Tongues

Photograph by
MARK HANAUER



Drawing by Shelagh Keeley

"REI MOMO IS PORTUGUESE FOR 'KING MOMO,'" DAVID BYRNE SAYS WHEN asked about the title of his new album of Latin American-style music. "He's this cartoon of a really rotund guy who's elected carnival king in Brazil. They give him a crown and pay respect to him, but they make fun of him, too."

In that respect, Byrne's carnival king may not be so unlike Byrne himself. For while Byrne leads a growing pack of Anglo-Saxon musicians who have found fresh inspiration in rock's African roots – including Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel and Malcolm McLaren – he has also become a favorite target for critics who accuse him of a kind of cultural tourism that amounts to a rock & roll version of *If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium*. Hipsters happily indict Byrne for terminal cuteness, for being an uptight white guy with exotic tastes (read *colonial*). And serious fans of African and Latino music go into a tizzy whenever his name is mentioned. To these skeptics, Byrne is just one in a long line of white popularizers who have found success riding the coattails of the big, black beat.

Of course, Byrne is no stranger to African – or Afro-American – music. Way back in 1977, he was telling interviewers that Kool and the Gang was one of the crucial keys to his own work, and ever since Talking Heads and Brian Eno collaborated on *More Songs About Buildings and Food* and *Fear of Music*, African rhythms have exerted themselves in his music, sometimes, one suspects, without his even being aware of it.

After Byrne and Eno waded through the wilds of African mysticism on their collaboration *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* and Talking Heads did their big-band Afro-funk albums *Remain in Light* and *Speaking in Tongues*, however, Byrne seemed to be reaching beyond the group for a new hybrid of African rhythm, lyrical surrealism and rock & roll. With the exception of *Little Creatures*, the Heads' nostalgic look back at a more or less traditional rock sound, Byrne's ethnomusicological obsessions have increasingly towered over the other members of the band. Indeed, on *Naked*, the group's most recent record, Talking Heads seemed to recede into a collaborative stew of Pan-African rhythms – everything from salsa to *soukous* – while Byrne's lyrics floated aimlessly above. Some have even questioned whether the group has a future.

Meanwhile, Byrne's own roots-music projects chugged along: first, *Beleza Tropical*, a compilation of Brazilian pop songs; then *Ile Áiyé*, a documentary on the sounds and sights of the Brazilian *candomblé* religion; then a second Brazilian compilation, *O Samba*; and finally, *Rei Momo*.

"For me," a bleary-eyed Byrne says the morning after one of his first shows on the *Rei Momo* tour, "the jump from a claimed or implied African influence on Talking Heads to this [Latino music] is a completely natural transition. A lot of it comes from the same place. It's right on our doorstep, right in our back yard. Instead of saying, 'Let's go far afield and find something exotic, something that'll be a new gimmick, a new sound,' I can literally walk two blocks and see and hear a great deal of this music coming out of cars, coming out of doorways."

Of course, it's one thing to be a fan of such Latin music stars as Cuban chanteuse Celia Cruz or Latino percussionists Johnny Pacheco, Willie Colon and Ray Barretto, and something else entirely when the fan pulls these stars into the studio as Byrne did for *Rei Momo*. "For years I'd listened to this music," he says, "and at some point it just seeped into me enough where I felt comfortable enough to say, 'Okay, now I can actually approach the musicians and work with them, and it's not gonna seem like I'm just adding a sound or a texture onto something else.'"

While Byrne can now whip off the names of various Latin and Brazilian rhythms with abandon – merengue, *cumbia*, *charanga*, *mapeyé*, cha-cha, mambo, samba and several other more esoteric beats – he readily admits that he couldn't have written *Rei Momo* without the help of percussionist Milton Cardona and [*Cont. on 66*]

GROOMING BY VICTOR VIDAL FOR CLOUTIER

Springsteen

[Cont. from 15] and then cut a studio album. The outlook for the E Street Band members' solo recording careers is a bit cloudier, though: Clemons's *Night With Mr. C*, his third solo album for Columbia Records, was a flop, failing to even make *Billboard*'s Top 200 album chart, and it appears unlikely that the label will want another album. Lofgren played several East Coast clubs with his brother's band in December but has been unable to find a label for his next solo album. In addition, he and pianist Roy Bittan are coproducing sessions in Los Angeles for actress Stephanie Kramer, the star of the TV show *Hunter*.

Max Weinberg, who reenrolled last year at Seton Hall University, in Orange, New Jersey, graduated in December with a degree in communications and plans to go to law school. But he remains hopeful that Springsteen will reenlist him as his drummer.

"You can never be sure what Bruce is gonna do next," says Weinberg, who joined the band in 1974. Although Weinberg says he's "not waiting around," he also adds that he's "not packing away my drums."

Springsteen's relationship with the E Street Band has been ambiguous since 1982, when he decided that the demo tapes he recorded by himself for *Nebraska* were better than the band versions of the same songs. After that album was released, according to Dave Marsh's Springsteen biography *Glory Days*, Springsteen considered making another album without the band. *Tunnel of Love*, his most recent record, was made with minimal input from most of the band members.

But the pivotal factor in Springsteen's reevaluation of the band may have been the Amnesty International tour, which was the first time he'd toured with other musicians since 1973. "In rock & roll, you work in a very isolated environment," he said when the Amnesty caravan began. "You move from town to town, but you're basically with the same group of thirty people. I wanted to look outward."

During the tour, Springsteen formed a friendship with Sting, who, he once joked, "tutors me on what's wrong with my music." Subsequently, Springsteen showed signs of broadening his musical horizons. Sting often duetted with him on "The River," a song that also featured Shankar, the Indian-born violinist from Peter Gabriel's band. Branford Marsalis, Sting's saxophonist, joined the E Streeters, along with percussionists from Gabriel's and Youssou N'Dour's bands.

"The end of this tour marks my graduation of sorts," Springsteen said a year ago. "And I hope that I will be able to go back home and in my music write about a different sensibility that I felt on this tour." ■

David Byrne

[Cont. from 48] arranger Angel Fernandez.

"Some of the musicians are much better in describing exactly what the hybrids are than I am," Byrne says. "First, I'd play the stuff for Milton, just as a demo at home, and say, 'Milton, what kind of a rhythm could we do with this tune?' The sambas were pretty obvious, but sometimes he'd say, 'This sounds like a *mapayé* or a merengue,' but some of the other stuff was, well, what *is* it? And then it would evolve into a hybrid of a couple of different rhythms mushed on top of one another or layered together. Sometimes there were three different levels of things going on, and you'd wonder, 'Is this gonna work?' "

But it does work, especially in concert, and Byrne is ecstatic to see the large numbers of kids who are dancing to these complex rhythms as if they'd been hearing them their whole lives.

"*All* these rhythms come out of Africa," he says, "but the important thing is in the attitude, in how rhythms and cross-rhythms and syncopations are the means to a kind of transcendence that's common to Latin music, Brazilian music, Kool, funk – all of it." Even rock & roll? Especially rock & roll, he says. "When it works, when it's happening, when James Brown is on, it just lifts you up to another plane of existence, in the same way that Santeria drumming or voodoo drumming or *candomble* drumming does. It's all the same thing. It doesn't put you under a trance, but it does get you a little bit there, so that even teenagers on Long Island get a little taste of Santerias – in this case, a little bit more than a taste."

If Byrne's pursuit of trickledown transcendence led him from Talking Heads to Tito Puente, why can't it also work the other way? Could Talking Heads have played Byrne's *Rei Momo* material? Do Talking Heads even have a future?

Byrne says that the question of Talking Heads "is not something I ask myself," but one look at him onstage, clad in the same all-white uniform as his sixteen-piece Latino *orquiestra*, wouldn't seem to leave much hope for ardent Heads fans, especially when his new band can play songs like *Naked*'s "Mr. Jones" just as well as his old one. (Although Talking Heads are still contracted to do at least four more albums for Sire, the group hasn't toured together since 1984.) Indeed, with his hair slicked back and his whites swathed in the deeply saturated stage color, the crooning Byrne looks more like some postmodern Ricky Ricardo – albeit one pumped up with the percussive energy of rock and salsa – than the quirky Talking Head in a Big Suit.

"I knew I could take a song, just any kind of generic song I'd written, and adapt it," he says. "But a few songs on this record just couldn't have been done by Talking Heads, because the style is so locked into a Latin thing it would have sounded silly with a backbeat."

Ironically, that's not all that different from the criticism that's often been laid at Byrne's door. *Rei Momo*, say the naysayers, sounds like Talking Heads with a clumsy Latin accent. Byrne should just try being himself for a change.

But to a master hybridizer who seems all too aware of his limitations, these criticisms are beside the point.

"I heard that Willie Colon said something in *Billboard* to the effect that he was pissed off that it takes an Anglo guy to bring this music out," says Byrne. "And he was a hundred percent right. There's plenty of Latin songs out there that to my mind are just as good as the stuff I do. We're not exactly saying that this is Latin music as it is at this moment. But what can I do? It's the kind of situation where people might not be interested unless someone like me says, 'Hey, check this out.' I don't know how to get around that. The only thing to do is to do it and then step back and say, 'Okay, see how much fun this stuff is? Now go ahead and enjoy it.' " ■

CRAIG BROMBERG *is author of the biography 'The Wicked Ways of Malcolm McLaren,' recently published by Harper and Row.*

Tom Cruise

[Cont. from 46] and roll!" and run onto the set.

Cast and crew moved from the United States to the Philippines to shoot the Vietnam scenes. After the combat sequences were wrapped, the very next day the schedule called for a scene that in the movie takes place in a Mexican resort, a kind of Margaritaville for paraplegics. Kovic, who went to Vietnam a virgin and returned paralyzed from the middle of the chest down, spends the first night of his life with a woman, a Mexican prostitute.

For Cruise, this love scene was the most demanding of the entire shoot. He felt drained after filming the battle sequences, and there was the touchiness of the subject matter. "He's a very shy boy," says Stone. "And he had to do several scenes with whores. It was tough for him."

Cruise had spent time with paraplegics and discovered that they can have active sex lives even if they don't climax in a conventional sense. He discusses this frankly and with sensitivity. He recalls that several takes of him with the hooker were tried but rejected. After having played Kovic in a wheelchair on the set in Dallas, he was having difficulty getting into character again as a paraplegic. "I was going at it, and it wasn't working," he says. "I'd nailed the character in Dallas, and then we'd done Vietnam, and then I had a scene where I had to be Ron in a wheelchair again. I was just like, 'I don't know where I am. I lost it. Am I Kovic now?' I remember I was so physically exhausted. I said, 'Oliver, I'm sorry, man, I just don't have it. I'm lost.' He said, 'You are Kovic, just do it, don't think about it.' "

They tried it one more time. "I always just *saw* the scene," Cruise says. "I mean, you can't act all the complexities: 'I'll never feel the inside of a woman. I can feel the pressure of her body, but I'll never feel her skin against my chest. I'll never really.' That whole thing. And also the beauty of this woman, holding a naked woman for the first time and how incredible that is."

In his performance, Cruise was building toward some kind of climax. Unexpectedly, tears started flowing down his cheeks. "I remember doing the scene and just letting go, and that's when I started crying," he says. "That wasn't written in the script. That's when we got the whole thing. Paraplegics talk about almost an emotional orgasm that they feel."

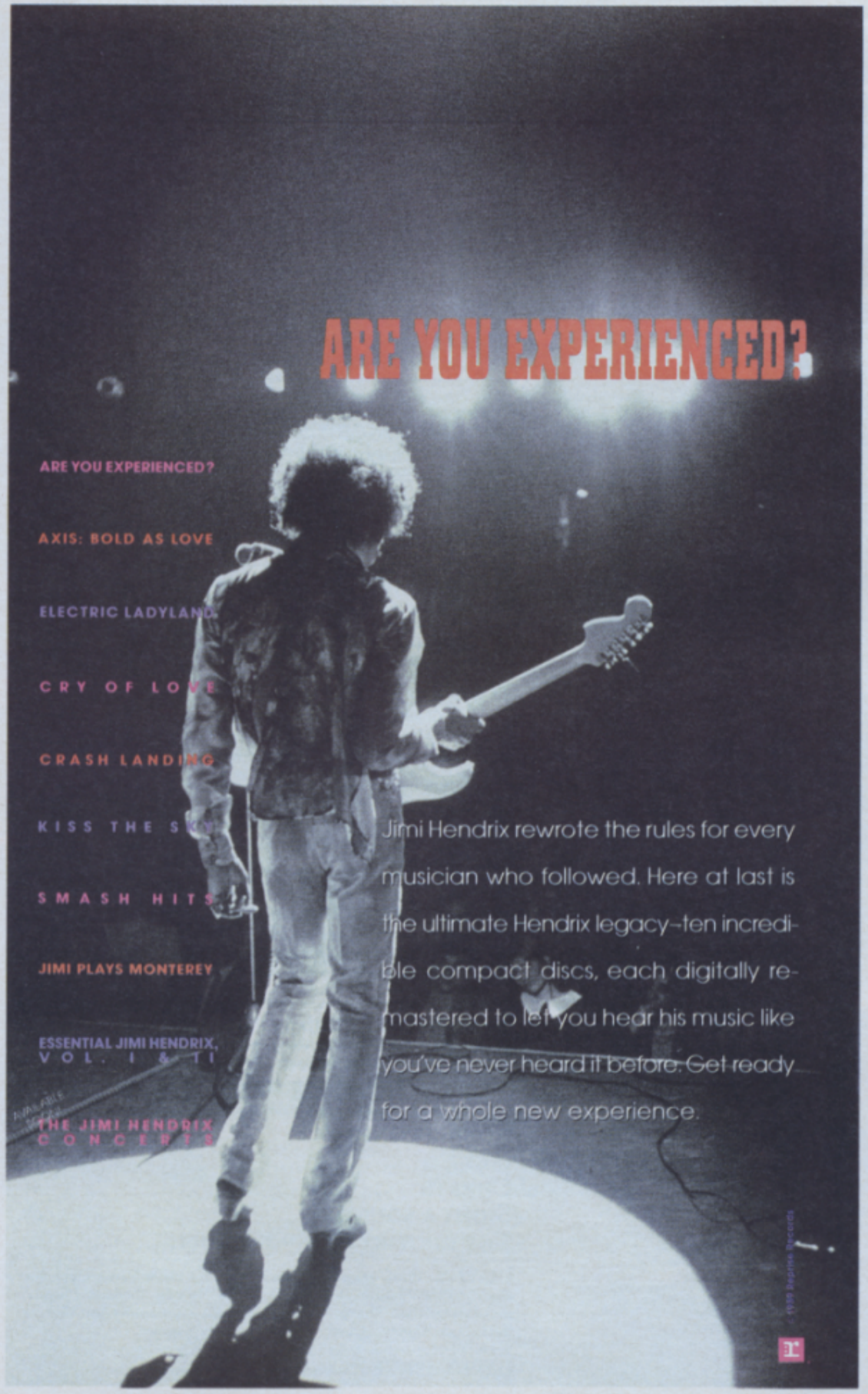
That's what Cruise got, a grace note as an actor with all the immediacy of a sexual climax.

BY OLIVER STONE'S RECKONING, TWO months of filmmaking is like six months of real life. It ages everyone involved. Indeed, Cruise seems much older than his twenty-seven years. "I think he became middle-aged making this movie," Stone says of his star. "I think he passed out of his youth truly into early middle age. He'll never be the same boy that he was before. He knows too much now."

After *Born* finished shooting, Stone and Cruise both traveled through Southeast Asia, their paths crossing in Bangkok. "You've done a great job, Tom," Stone said one night when he ran into Tom and Mimi. "You should go out and just be young and enjoy the autumn of your youth. Because it's gonna go. Go out now and have a fucking ball."

"You're right," Cruise said. And he did unwind a bit, taking time off to travel in Europe with Mimi. But pretty soon he was back in the driver's seat, charging hard into his next project, the stock-car-racing movie, due out this summer.

He is charging hard right this minute as he fights the end-of-day traffic on Sunset, racing to return me to my own car. We are now on easy terms, talking excitedly about lightweight subjects, and I don't pay attention to where he's driving. He swings up to a hotel, thinking it's where I'm parked, but it's the wrong place. My car is a good fifteen minutes in the opposite direction. Cruise is already several minutes late for a six o'clock meeting, so I volunteer to jump out and catch a cab. Forget it, he says. He'll return me to my car. "Let's rock and roll!" he shouts and roars back into the rush-hour traffic. ■



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